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# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GERMAN RATION REDUCTIONS OF APRIL, 1942

Report No. 33

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April 16, 1942

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Research and Analysis Branch

Economics Division

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GERMAN RATION REDUCTIONS OF APRIL, 1942

Report No. 33

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SUMMARY

The new German food rations, which became effective on April 6, 1942, involved average reductions of about 7 per cent in bread and cereal products, 19 per cent in meats, and 17 per cent in fats and oils. Rations for normal consumers, heavy workers and long or night workers were cut more than the average. The reduction was below the average for the very heavy workers, so that the disparity in their favor, as compared with all other civilian consumers, was further increased. The portion of the German population included within the special working categories is still provided with nutritionally adequate diets, while the normal consumers, who make the smallest contribution to the war effort, will have diets which are only on the margin of adequacy.

Analysis of the food supply situation for Germany indicates that:

1. The new ration reduction cannot be attributed to the emergence of a critical situation in the food balance for the current crop year, ending July 31, 1942.
2. The longer term outlook is different for each of the basic food categories.

   a. Breadgrains. Supplies will more than meet rationed requirements, so that surpluses can be accumulated as emergency reserves.

   b. Meats. The German balance is in all probability assured for the crop year 1942-43, which begins on August 1, 1942. For a few years after 1942-43, Germany may have to become a net exporter to European countries cooperating with her, and may thus be forced to invoke further reductions in rations.

c. Fats and Oils. Production levels and net imports which now appear attainable in 1942-43 should guarantee a balance for that year. Thereafter, a further reduction in rations will be necessary. Such a reduction might still maintain fats and oils consumption above the 1916-18 level.

3. The reduction in rations was made to adjust consumption to the longer-run supply outlook. It is now recognized in Germany that the agricultural potentialities of the conquered lands cannot soon be realized. New sources of foodstuffs may not be required before the end of 1943, but will be necessary thereafter as a result of less favorable supply situations in the countries from which Germany now imports. Further reductions in fats and oils -- and perhaps in meats -- during the next year might indicate that Germany is preparing for a prolongation of the war and of the European blockade beyond 1943.

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GERMAN RATION REDUCTIONS OF APRIL, 1942

On March, 1942, the German Government announced a reduction in food rations, effective April 6, 1942, of some 7 per cent for bread and cereal products, 19 per cent for meats, and 17 per cent for fats and oils. (See Table I). Reductions were made simultaneously in all these three basic food categories, and, indeed, for practically every consumer group. (The sole exception is in fats and oils rations for all children, and in the bread rations of those between 3 and 14 years of age.) German rations had previously remained almost unchanged from the time when rationing was first instituted by the Nazi regime, in September, 1939, with the single exception of an important curtailment in meats effective June, 1941. The present reductions, therefore, are not only unique in that they affect all of the basic food categories, but they are actually of a magnitude previously unparalleled for any one of these commodities. Thus the meat consumption of large groups of German adults (including heavy workers and long and night workers) was reduced by 25 per cent, and the meat allocated to children up to 6 years of age by 40 per cent. Fats and oils rations were reduced almost 25 per cent for normal consumers, and nearly as much for heavy workers and long and night workers. Though no figures were given for the farmer and farm worker category, it was indicated that decreases were being made for this group also.

TABLE 1. NEW GERMAN RATION REDUCTIONS
EFFECTIVE APRIL 6, 1942 (IN GRAMS PER WEEK, WITH PERCENTAGE CHANGES.)

| Consumer Groups | Bread | | Meat | | Fats & Oils | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | New Ration | Percentage Change | New Ration | Percentage Change | New Ration | Percentage Change |
| Normal consumer..... | 2000 | -11.1 | 300 | -25 | 206 | -23.4 |
| Long & night worker.... | 2600 | - 8.8 | 450 | -25 | 226 | -21.8 |
| Heavy worker..... | 3400 | - 6.8 | 600 | -25 | 306 | -22.3 |
| Very heavy worker..... | 4400 | - 5.4 | 850 | -15 | 575 | - 8.4 |
| Farm worker*/..... | 2750 | -18.5 | 270 | -25 | 375 | -25 |
| Children 0-3..... | 900 | -18.2 | 150 | -40 | 125 | 0 |
| " 3-6..... | 1200 | + 9.1 | 150 | -40 | 187 | 0 |
| " 6-10..... | 1700 | 0 | 350 | -12.5 | 259 | 0 |
| " 10-14..... | 2600 | 0 | 350 | -12.5 | 259 | 0 |

*/ Estimated.



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In the following, estimates of these new levels for farm groups are made on the basis of proportionate reductions in other groups.

The official German statement expressed the hope that the previous level of consumption might be restored and even exceeded when "food space" in the east became available and when anticipated increases in food production in other European areas were realized. The curtailment, it went on to explain, was made necessary by the following circumstances:

1. The increases in the categories of consumers getting higher rations,
2. The requirements of foreign workmen and of war prisoners,
3. The incorporation into the Reich of 1,000,000 German nationals from other countries,
4. The relatively unsatisfactory level of the harvests in 1940 and 1941,
5. The demands of other European countries upon Germany for food, and
6. The need for protecting Germany's food reserves.

In this study these reasons are analyzed against the background of the German food situation as it is known to us. An appraisal of the real significance of the new reductions can then be made.

## I. THE 1941-42 FOOD SITUATION PRIOR TO THE RATION REDUCTION

The German food situation for 1941-42 was appraised in a study prepared in December, 1941.1/ On the basis of material available after that date this appraisal was altered in February of this year. A summary presentation of the statistical conclusions of these studies is shown in the accompanying table:

TABLE 2. SUMMARY PRESENTATION OF GERMAN FOOD SITUATION 1941-42
(1,000 Short Tons)

| Commodity | Carry-over Aug. 1, 1942 */ | Domestic Utilization (before reduction) | Domestic Production | Trade | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Exports | Imports |
| Breadgrains | 3,550 | 11,950 | 11,500 | 1,500 | 1,200 |
| Meats | 180 | 2,790 | 2,500 | 250 | 430 |
| Fats and Oils | (-265) | 1,635 | 1,000 | 120 | 310 |

*/ There is some evidence that the estimated carryovers shown for breadgrains and for meats are underestimated by an amount up to 10 per cent of the figures given. However, data specific enough to warrant changes in the basic statistics have not yet come to our attention. The deficit in fats and oils is discussed in the text below.

Accompanying this analysis were statements to the effect that the statistical balance in foods did not reveal any critical gaps. It was felt that the Germans would not encounter any difficulties in breadgrains and in meats to the end of the crop year

1/ See "The Present German Position with Reference to Food Supply and Standard of Living", a supporting study to Monograph No. 3, Coordinator of Information, December 12, 1941. See also, "Amendments to Report on German Food Situation", Economic Report No. 20, February 25, 1942.

1941-42. Even with respect to fats and oils, for which a statistical deficit is shown in the 1941-42 balance sheet, it was felt that adjustments in supplies and utilization might result in a situation where the accounts would balance, or indeed, even leave a small surplus. However, in the light of the obvious tightness of the situation, the view was expressed that there would be a reduction in fats and oils rations before the end of the crop year 1941-42.

Throughout these reports emphasis was placed upon the likelihood that the Germans must look forward to extreme food conditions in 1942-43. Partly this forecast was influenced by the size of the carryovers on August 1, 1942, which (even after allowing for underestimation) were significantly below desirable, and even normal levels. Principally, however, it was based on the circumstance that Germany in 1940-41 and 1941-42 drew heavily from areas which could not continue to be tapped.

## II. CRITIQUE OF GERMAN EXPLANATIONS FOR RATION REDUCTION

### A. Occupational Shifts

In our earlier analysis, the distribution of population into the various consuming groups was considered to be representative for the year 1941-42. Our figures may have exaggerated the weekly consumption requirements at the beginning of 1941-42; they probably understated these requirements at the end of 1941-42. For the year as a whole, it was expected that the approximation to total consumption would be a satisfactory one. There appears now to be no reason for altering this conclusion. In the announcement of the reduction, the Germans indicated that normal consumers comprise 40 per cent of the total population. In our estimates, a figure of 29.1 million persons (or 41 per cent) was used. Some 13,000,000 people were assumed to be employed in special working categories -- long and night workers, heavy workers, and extra heavy workers -- comprising more than one-third of the total gainfully employed population. This is still considered to be an ample allowance for the year as a whole.

With respect to numbers of soldiers, our 1941-42 population breakdown now appears to be too low. Our estimates of food requirements were based on the assumption that 6.5 million soldiers would get front-line rations from the food supplies of the Old Reich throughout the year. This number is undoubtedly below the size of the German armed forces during the past year. However, several important factors must be borne in mind. First, many German divisions are always stationed in areas where they are fed "off the land", without making any demands whatsoever upon the German food supply. Second,

some part of the German army (perhaps up to 1,000,000 men) are recruited from areas in Greater Germany outside of the Old Reich. Food to be supplied to these men comes only in part from the supplies with which we are concerned. Third, large numbers of German divisions -- said to be at least one third of the total number on active fronts -- are engaged in rear-line activities where they are probably fed rations below those of front-line troops. Finally, some proportion of German military forces is stationed in Germany, or is on leave in Germany. These men not only receive rations at a lower level, but in all probability should be considered as contributing to the German economic effort. It was the combined effect of these factors which prompted our use of an average figure of 6.5 million men to be provided with front-line rations throughout the year. This figure may have permitted our estimates of people engaged in non-military activity to come closer to the actual number so engaged than would a larger military estimate; it certainly does not understate the quantity of food from German supplies which was consumed by soldiers during 1941-42.

It is therefore felt that the first reason given by the Germans -- namely, increases in the categories of consumers getting higher rations -- is not pertinent as a motivating factor for the ration reduction in the current crop year 1941-42.

B. Foreigners in Germany

In our estimates for 1941-42 the food requirements are provided for 3.5 million foreign workers and war prisoners. Though there is evidence to indicate that the present number of foreign

workers and war prisoners in Greater Germany is in excess of this number, the increase appears to have been made since mid-winter. For the year taken as a whole, a figure of 3.5 million persons in this category, fed from the food supplies of the Old Reich, seems to be a generous basis for the allocation of foodstuffs. Hence, in assigning responsibility for the reductions, it was felt that little weight need be given to the second of the German reasons.

C. Repatriation

It is questionable that 1,000,000 German nationals from other countries were ever incorporated into Greater Germany. Perhaps a figure of 750,000 would be closer to the truth, though even this estimate is held to be over-ambitious. In any event, only a part of the "Volksdeutsche" would be residing in the Old Reich. Our 1941-42 estimates were constructed on the basis of a total population for this area of 71,000,000, excluding prisoners and foreign workmen. In this figure a rough allowance was made for a population increase due to repatriated German nationals.1/

Consideration has thus been given to the German explanations numbered A. to C. above. The truth appears to be that with reference to 1941-42, at any rate, changes in population and/or adjustments within the population toward larger proportions in higher consumption groups cannot be held responsible for such increased food demands that a lowering of the German rations schedule was necessary.

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1/ The estimates for 1941-42 and subsequent figures for population in Germany are tentative. A comprehensive study now in progress in the Economics Division will make a complete and detailed list of figures available shortly.

D. Unsatisfactory Harvests

It is true that the level of harvest in 1940 and 1941 has not been up to the pre-war experience. This fact was taken into account in making our estimates. The 1940 yields were introduced explicitly in our calculations; they are reflected in the carryovers on August 1, 1941. These carryovers and estimates for the 1941 crop were used in our appraisal of the 1941-42 situation. To date, the production levels shown in Table 2 do not appear to have been too high. In fact, there is some evidence that output may actually have been higher than the figures used, so that our calculations are on a conservative level.

E. Exports

The Germans also point to the demands of other European countries upon Germany as an explanation for the need for reducing rations. These demands are summarized under exports in Table 2. Here again it is felt that total exports were not greater than estimated in our previous studies. Indeed there is some evidence to suggest that the balance between imports and exports resulted in a situation even more favorable for the Germans than indicated in our estimates. Though this evidence does not yet warrant modification of our basic figures, it may be pertinent to point out that exports of breadgrains to countries outside of Greater Germany may not have reached the level of 800,000 short tons, indicated in our February report.

With reference to meats, total imports may have been greater than the figure of 430,000 tons, which we used; perhaps

exports until the end of the crop year 1941-42 may be less than 250,000 tons. The deterioration in the fodder position is said to have increased Bulgarian exports of meat to Germany (though it perhaps decreased Hungarian exports). From the Netherlands, 1941-42 exports to Germany may well exceed 40,000 tons. The Germans have demanded 150,000 tons from France, and at last reports were receiving meat deliveries at a rate which would exceed this on an annual basis. Specific evidence suggesting just how the increase in imports should be made is lacking. Yet, there appears to be basis for using a total of 500,000 tons instead of the lower figure shown.

Similarly, French and French African exports of fats and oils to Germany may have been understated in our 1941-42 report. As already indicated, the German situation can be more favorable than the one which prompted our earlier conclusion that, though fats and oils rations might be cut before the end of the 1941-42 crop year, shortages of strategic importance would not occur in that year.

F. Protection of Reserves

There remains only the German statement that the reduction would "protect Germany's food reserve." It has already been pointed out that in the absence of the ration reduction, Germany would have entered the 1942-43 year with reserve stocks at levels which would have been low absolutely and, taken as a whole, low relative even to stock levels in the earlier war years. It is calculated that in the seventeen weeks remaining between April 6, 1942, and August 1, 1942, -- the date at which we assume the new crop year

to begin -- the German ration reduction will involve the savings shown on the table which follows.

TABLE 3. AMOUNTS SAVED IN 1941-42 RATION REDUCTION (in tons)

| Breadgrains | Meats | Fats and Oils |
|---|---|---|
| 230,000 | 136,000 | 76,500 |

Each of these is a significant addition to the carryover previously estimated; in particular, the meat carryover is restored to a favorable level. With respect to breadgrains, the addition is also noteworthy and would be even larger if account were taken of the recent decision on the part of the Germans to use extraction rates above 80 per cent. In all, the ration reduction certainly contributes to a markedly improved carryover situation from the crop year 1941-42.

## III. LONG RUN ASPECTS

Our analysis already has shown that the reduction in rations could not be attributed to the development of a critical situation for 1941-42. Actually, the statistical picture for this year is involved only to the extent that the Germans desire to increase the carryover into the year 1942-43. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that it is in longer run aspects of the situation that the Germans found their main reasons for a ration reduction in April, 1942.

It is, of course, too early to make any detailed statistical appraisal of the 1942-43 position in these three basic food categories. However, it is interesting to make certain simple comparisons of requirements for 1942-43 on the basis of the new level of rations and a reasonable breakdown of the German population.

Of course, the quantities "saved" for the year 1942-43 will bear no direct relationship to our calculations of the quantities saved in the seventeen remaining weeks of the 1941-42 season. A representative population breakdown for the coming year must take into consideration the change in population numbers and the new distribution of consuming groups that will be characteristics of that year.

In the accompanying table, a population breakdown is ventured for 1942-43 on the assumption of 71.5 million persons in addition to 4.0 million war prisoners and foreign workers in the Old Reich. The number of soldiers (to be fed front-line rations from the food available in the Old Reich) is assumed to average 8,000,000, with reductions in the proportionate numbers of normal

TABLE 4. ESTIMATED CONSUMPTION, 1942-43

WEEKLY RATIONS

| Consumer Group | Population No. (millions) | Population % of total | Flour Indiv. per cap. (grams) | Flour Total metric tons | Meats Indiv. per cap. (grams) | Meats Total metric tons | Fats and Oils Indiv. per cap. (grams) | Fats and Oils Total metric tons |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Normal consumer | 28.5 | 39.9 | 1,677.5 | 47,809 | 300 | 8,550 | 206 | 5,871 |
| Farmers | 7.1 | 9.9 | 2,247.5 | 15,957 | 270 | 1,917 | 375 | 2,663 |
| Heavy worker | 6.5 | 9.1 | 2,975.5 | 19,341 | 600 | 3,900 | 306 | 1,989 |
| Extra-heavy worker | 1.5 | 2.1 | 3,525.5 | 5,288 | 850 | 1,275 | 575 | 863 |
| Long or night worker | 4.6 | 6.4 | 2,139.5 | 9,842 | 450 | 2,070 | 226 | 1,040 |
| Soldiers | 8.0 | 11.2 | 4,137.5 | 33,100 | 1400 | 11,200 | 600 | 4,800 |
| Children 0-3 | 3.7 | 5.2 | 830.5 | 3,073 | 150 | 555 | 125 | 463 |
| 3-6 | 3.0 | 4.2 | 1,061.5 | 3,185 | 150 | 450 | 188 | 564 |
| 6-10 | 4.1 | 5.7 | 1,446.5 | 5,931 | 350 | 1,435 | 266 | 1,091 |
| 10-14 | 4.5 | 6.3 | 2,139.5 | 9,628 | 350 | 1,575 | 266 | 1,197 |
| Total | 71.5 | 100.0 | | 153,154 | | 32,927 | | 20,541 |
| War Prisoners | 4.0 | | 1,677.5 | 6,710 | | 1,050 | | 824 |
| Grand Totals: | | | | | | | | |
| Weekly basis (metric tons) | | | | 159,864 | | 33,977 | | 21,365 |
| Annual basis ( " " ) | | | | 8,312,928 | | 1,766,804 | | 1,110,980 |
| Annual basis (short tons) | | | | 9,144,221 | | 1,943,484 | | 1,222,078 |



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consumers, farmers, and long and night workers. The table also shows the new rations and the total quantities needed in order to supply the population as defined.

TABLE 5. COMPARATIVE TOTAL DOMESTIC CONSUMPTION REQUIREMENTS
(1000 Short Tons)

| | 1941-42 (before reduction) | 1941-42 (after reduction) | 1942-43 (after reduction) */ |
|---|---|---|---|
| Breadgrains | 11,950 | 11,720 | 11,700 |
| Meats | 2,790 | 2,654 | 2,445 |
| Fats and Oils | 1,635 | 1,558 | 1,365 |

*/ These figures are built up from those in Table 4. An overall extraction rate of 90 per cent was assumed for grains, and 1,600,000 tons of grain was added for seed. Corrections for waste and illicit buying were made amounting to about 500,000 tons for meats, and 150,000 tons for fats and oils.

Various estimates of domestic consumption are shown in Table 5. It is seen that the requirements for breadgrains are approximately the same as those for the past year; significant savings are indicated in both the meats and the fats and oils categories. Thus a reduction of almost 8 per cent in domestic requirements (including soldiers) for meats appears to have been accomplished; for fats and oils, the savings amount to more than 12 per cent. It is interesting to appraise these estimates of 1942-43 consumption requirements in the light of the probable supply situation.

The new estimate of German breadgrain requirements is lower than the normal production of wheat and rye in the Old Reich. Though

Germany has in the past year been a net exporter of breadgrains, this circumstance need not continue. However, she may well be able to maintain net exports of 200,000 or 300,000 tons in 1942-43 without reducing the size of her carryover.

For meats, new requirements are below the current level of domestic production in the Old Reich. Since this is based principally upon domestically produced feedstuffs, this rate of production should be maintained. German imports in recent months have been swelled by the heavy slaughter made necessary in various parts of Europe by the unfavorable fodder situation. Insofar as she is able to maintain a net import status, however, the new rate of consumption may mean the opportunity to build up reserve stocks. However, Germany cannot expect to continue to be a net importer of meats. The livestock situation in the countries subject to German control can be expected to deteriorate, at least for the next two or three years. Hence the Reich may soon be in a position where net exports to these countries will constitute a requirement of significant proportions. The German meat economy has not yet been set up on a level which could handle net export demands of 200,000 or 300,000 tons. If such became necessary, further consumption curtailment will appear to be in order. Such a circumstance does not now seem likely for 1942-43.

By means of the ration reduction, the fats and oils economy has been brought into a closer degree of self-sufficiency. However, German domestic productive capacity cannot be expected to reach the figure of nearly 1.4 million tons required at the new consumption

level. Yet production may well exceed the figure of 1,000,000 tons estimated for 1941-42. This will certainly be true if acreages in oleaginous crops continue to expand, since the increased production of vegetable oils will offset any small declines in animal fat output. Unless similar developments occur in other European countries, however -- and this is a slow process -- Germany cannot expect to import regularly the net surplus of some 200,000 tons which is necessary to put her fats and oils account into balance. Because of the ration reduction, requirements have been curtailed in Austria, the Sudetenland, and the other parts of Greater Germany to which the Old Reich exported fats and oils. Hence, even though imports into the Old Reich in 1942-43 should fall below the level estimated for the current year, they may still permit a net surplus of about 200,000 tons. There is, therefore, reason to believe that, with imports, the new level of consumption can result in a balanced fats and oils situation in 1942-43. However, since it will be difficult to maintain imports in such quantities over the years, further ration reductions may be necessary before the German position can be considered as a sound one for longer periods.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

The newly announced reductions in German food rations have contributed to the German carryover position for August 1, 1942. This is obvious. More important is the likelihood that the new levels of consumption will bring the foodstuffs economy of the Old Reich into balance, at least for 1942-43, without the need of cutting into the reserves with which she will enter that year. This state of affairs represents no small achievement by the Germans.

From a nutritional viewpoint, the reductions announced are significant. However, careful analysis reveals that the rations for the German population, particularly for those in the special working categories, still provide nutritionally adequate diets. Those who will suffer most from the recent cuts are normal consumers, who make the smallest concrete contribution to the war effort. However, it must also be remembered that the reduction was introduced at the season of the year when non-rationed foods are becoming more abundant. Hence, its effects will be mitigated to some extent, or at least delayed.

The reduction must have a negative effect upon the morale of the population, even though seasonal increases in some commodities ameliorate conditions in the immediate future. On the other hand, there are certain aspects of the present situation which make the reductions operate as a positive factor on some morale fronts.

The new rations are more comparable with the prevailing rations in countries actively cooperating with Germany -- Finland, Hungary, Rumania, and Italy. Also, an obvious interpretation is

that the reduction reflects German weakness, but such an interpretation may well lead to disappointed hopes -- an item of no small value to the Germans in the war of nerves.